



Joint News Release

Joint Public Relations Team

12:30 p.m., December 20, 2009

Primary Contact: Jim Westhoff cell (302) 345-5877 - for updates on road conditions throughout the weekend, call Jim at this number.

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State of Emergency is Lifted

Governor, agencies ask people to stay off the roads as many have not been cleared

Conditions have improved in Delaware enough for Governor Jack Markell to lift the State of Emergency, but motorists are still urged to stay off the roads unless travel is absolutely necessary. With safety the priority, the Governor and state officials emphasize the continued importance of avoiding any unnecessary travel.

Many roads throughout Delaware have yet to see a plow, according to crews from Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT). Most major thoroughfares are cleared, but many secondary and other back roads, as well as residential subdivisions, are not plowed. Those attempting to travel in untreated areas run the risk of getting stuck in deep snow or sliding off the road into drifts.

By staying in place and safe, the public can avoid having to make emergency calls for disabled vehicles, and police and other responders will be free to respond to true emergencies.

"Our plan today is to shift some resources from the primary roads to the secondary roads," said Jim Westhoff, DelDOT spokesman. "We had a very productive night, so most of the primary roads are in pretty good condition. Most of I-95 is just wet, and all of the other primary roads are either passable or clear."

However, the secondary roads will not be plowed down to the pavement, Westhoff said. "People have been driving on these roads for 36 hours, so the roads are hard-packed snow. Our plows will be able to clear the looser material, but most of the roads will have a covering of hard-packed snow and ice," he said.

With road conditions in mind, officials from the Office of Highway Safety (OHS) are asking residents to stay in. "Residents should not go out sightseeing today," said Angela Summers, spokesperson for OHS. "There is no reason to venture out and put yourself at risk or the lives of emergency personnel who may have to come rescue you if you crash or get stuck."

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Summers also warns against a particularly dangerous version of sledding. “Motorists are also discouraged from pulling sleds or tubes behind vehicles as that can pose a danger if the tube or sled ends up in someone else's travel lane particularly when vehicles go around corners,” she said. “Similarly, adults and children who want to go tubing or sledding are asked to not to do so near roadways due to the risk for sliding out into traffic.”

Delaware Emergency Management Agency officials continue to remind the public that driving is still difficult in many areas, while also giving some pointers to motorists who absolutely must travel today.

Travel should be restricted to necessary trips on roads that are familiar and where conditions are known. Those who must travel should call ahead to their destination for updated road conditions before starting out. Although snow has stopped, driving may still be affected by blowing snow and some streets will be icy as temperatures remain near or below freezing. Those who must travel should have a cell phone and have an emergency supply kit in their vehicles that includes boots, flash lights, safety lights and reflectors, water and a blanket.

Winds and freezing temperatures can result in damage to exposed skin. Those who need to spend time outside are urged to keep face, ears and hands covered and to dress in layers and water proof boots.

The public is reminded to continue to monitor weather and road conditions and winter safety tips on local media, state web sites and DEMA Twitter, <http://twitter.com/DelawareEMA>.

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